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ABSTRACT

A questionnaire was designed to explore various elements of job satisfaction, multiple employment behavior, and other variables affecting the lives and work of public school teachers in Texas. A final return of 70 percent was received from a randomly selected mailing. Results revealed that one in three teachers was considering leaving teaching. Of these, almost half cited low salaries as the chief reason for discontent. Other reasons listed were problems with the administration, excessive paper work, lack of input into school policy decisions, and problems concerning students such as discipline and lack of motivation. The survey also revealed that holding a job during the school year as well as working during the summer was common among the respondents. Twenty-two percent of the sample indicated that they also work in another job during the school year, while 30 percent held extra jobs during the summer. Most of these extra jobs were in a very low paying category. More than half of the multiple employment subjects said that the quality of their teaching would improve if they did not have to earn extra money and that they would not work outside of the school if their salaries were raised. The results of this study, coupled with knowledge of economic, political, and other trends affecting education in Texas, clearly point to the strong likelihood of a new teacher shortage in Texas in the near future. (JD)

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A SURVEY OF TEXAS PUBLIC
SCHOOL TEACHERS

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No research study is needed in order to show that teacher salaries in general, and Texas teaching salaries in particular, are not keeping pace with the burgeoning cost of living. While teaching has historically been a low-paying activity, it has been evident for some time that the past ten years or inflation coupled with cuts in school spending have further depressed the real income of teachers, with the actual buying power of teachers in the U. S. at large declining by an average 17% since 1970. Texas teachers have not escaped this phenomenon as evidenced by the fact that Texas currently ranks 35th among the states in average teaching salary.

While these facts can be verified by simple arithmetic, the human reactions to them are not as easily assessed. Last spring, the authors agreed that there appeared to be a trend of deteriorating morale among public school teachers enrolling in graduate level courses at Sam Houston State University. At the same time, the researchers noticed that increasing numbers of these practicing teachers seemed to be experiencing financial crises. Many reported accepting "moonlighting" positions in addition to their teaching duties. The researchers wondered just how severe and how pervasive this trend was, and the present study was the result. TSTA officials were also interested, and they agreed to supply a computer-generated random sample of the 110,000 TSTA

members so that a questionnaire could be mailed to them. The researchers designed the questionnaire which was intended to explore various elements of job satisfaction, future professional plans, moonlighting behavior, and other variables affecting the lives and work of public school teachers in Texas. The questionnaire was piloted on three graduate education classes and on a random sample of 100 teachers in a Houston-area school district. The questionnaire was revised several times based on these trial runs. Figure 1 presents the instrument in its final form.

The questionnaire was mailed to 424 randomly selected TSTA members in May of 1980. This mailing, plus a follow-up mailing to non-responding subjects, produced a final return of 291 questionnaires (70%).

Even though the researchers expected to find evidence of deteriorating morale, they were amazed at the results of their survey. The completed questionnaire painted a picture of Texas teachers who face daily economic hardship and acute discouragement. The results of this study, coupled with knowledge of economic political, and other cultural trends affecting education in Texas clearly point to the strong likelihood of a new and painful teacher shortage in Texas in the near future.

Some of the most revealing answers came to question number 8, which asked if the respondent was seriously considering leaving teaching as a profession. The researchers were shocked and dismayed to discover that considerably more

Figure 1
TEACHERS AND MOONLIGHTING

DIRECTIONS: Please circle or answer all items that apply to you. Add comments if you find a question to be vague.

1. What is your age? Years _____
2. Sex. Male Female
3. Marital Status Married Single Other
4. If married, does your spouse work? Yes No Does Not Apply
5. What is your highest degree? Bachelor's Master's Doctorate
6. Including yourself, how many people do you have living in your household; plus any others for whom you provide at least 50% of their support? Dependents _____
7. Are you the major bread winner in your household? Yes No Equal
8. Are you seriously considering leaving the teaching profession? Yes No
If yes, why are you considering leaving? _____
9. In what type of district do you teach? Urban Suburban Rural
10. What grade level do you primarily teach? K-5 6-8 9-12
11. How many years have you taught in the public schools? Years _____
12. What is your primary teaching subject or duty? _____
13. What is your current teaching salary per year? . \$ _____
14. Do you have an extra job during the summer when you are not under contract to your district? Yes No
15. How much do you earn during the summer? \$ _____
16. Do you have an extra job during the regular school year to supplement your teaching salary? (Include school-related and nonschool-related jobs. For example: school bus driver, salesperson, bookkeeper, etc.) . . . Yes No

If your answer to Question 16 is yes, please answer the following questions.

17. Do you feel that the quality of your teaching would improve if you did not have a second job during the regular school year? Yes No
18. How much extra money do you earn during the regular school year from the moonlighting job? . \$ _____
19. How many hours per week during the regular school year do you spend working at the extra job? Hours _____
20. Would you quit working the second job if your salary was increased adequately? Yes No
21. How large a raise in your teaching salary would you have to get to enable you to give up moonlighting during the regular school year? \$ _____
22. What is your extra job during the regular school year? (Please give a job title such as bookkeeper, rancher, clerk, waitress, etc., not the name of your employer.) _____

than one in every three teachers, or 38.4% of those responding indicated that they were seriously considering leaving teaching as a profession! When asked why, 46% listed low pay. The average salary of the sample was \$14,112.89, with only 21% earning more than the national teaching average of \$16,000. The average number of years experience of teachers in the study was 11.7, with 64% holding the bachelor's degree and 36% with the master's degree. Perhaps this degree of dissatisfaction with an average salary of approximately \$14,000 is more understandable when viewed in light of the "intermediate standard budget", a figure set annually by the U. S. Department of Labor as the amount of income required for a family of four to live in a solidly middle-class, but not affluent fashion. That figure has not been set for Fall 1980, but was \$20,856 as of Fall, 1979. This means that the average teacher in the study falls short of the 1979 mark by \$6,743.11! This must be particularly serious for the 30% of respondents in Texas who do not have a working spouse.

This is probably the appropriate point to look at some characteristics of the sample. The 291 respondents represent all 20 geographic TSTA Districts. Their mean age is 38.6 with a range from 22 to 67 years of age. Nineteen point nine percent are male while 80.1% are female. With regard to marital status, 76.6% are married, 17.2% are single, and 23.7% checked the "other" response. Seventy point one percent indicated that they have working spouses

while 29.9% do not. About half (50.2%) live in one- or two-member households, 40.9% live in three- or four-member households, and 8.9% live in five- or six-member households. A total of 39.9% reported that they are the major bread winner in their household. Most respondents, 40.5%, teach in urban districts, 32.6% in suburban, and 26.8% in rural districts. Elementary teachers (50.9%) outnumber those in grades six through eight (19.9%) and in high schools (29.2%).

There are a number of interesting points in the above descriptive data. While more than 80% of the sample are females, 39.9% of all teachers surveyed say they are the major breadwinner in their families, and another 21.3% of the total say they provide one half of their family's income. Only 38.8% of those surveyed contribute less than half of the family income. These figures clearly indicate the importance of the teaching income to the well-being of the families involved. A further breakdown by sex is also interesting. The survey reveals that 72.4% of all males and 31.8% of all females are the major breadwinners in their households. Since the average teaching salary was \$14,122, it is equally clear that there must be a considerable amount of financial hardship present particularly in those families where the teaching salary is the sole, or the major source of support.

This does not bode well for the male teacher, since our survey revealed that nearly three out of four male teachers provide the major support for their households. We have found more discontent among males, and we might expect to find few males engaged in teaching in Texas. The data confirms this expectation. Only eight, or 5.4% of elementary teachers are males while 16(16.8%) and 34(43.6%) junior high and high school teachers respectively are male. Texas has an especially acute shortage of males at the elementary level (5.4%). The national average for male elementary teachers is around 18%. This is particularly unfortunate in view of the high percentage of children who now live or will live in homes without a male adult (one half or more by some estimates) and in view of the general agreement as to the importance of a male model for young boys to emulate. The low percentage of male teachers in Texas is probably due to the fact that males have access to more desirable jobs than do females. The trend for few males to enter and many to leave teaching is unlikely to be soon reversed, since the survey reveals that considerably more males than females are dis-satisfied and considering quitting their jobs. Nearly half of the male teachers (48.3%) and 33.5% of female teachers say they are seriously considering leaving the profession.

The questionnaire also elicited reasons from those who indicated they were considering giving up teaching. Many reasons were cited, but the most frequent reason, given by

46%, was too little money. Some rather caustic comments were received. "Try raising two kids on \$12,000 a year", one teacher wrote, "and you won't have to ask."

Such dissatisfaction with salary is all the more remarkable in light of numerous studies which have shown that in the past, teachers have not been money-oriented. Other reasons listed were problems with the administration such as lack of appreciation, excessive paper work, lack of input into school policy decisions, and problems concerning students such as discipline and lack of motivation.

In view of the above findings, it is not surprising that the survey revealed that holding a job during the school year (moonlighting) as well as working during the summer is common among the respondents. Twenty-two percent of the sample indicated that they moonlight, while 30.2% hold extra jobs during the summer (16.8% do both). Not surprisingly, 67.2% of the moonlighters indicated that they are the major breadwinners for their families. Half of these are males and fully one half of the moonlighters are considering leaving teaching.

Since summer work and moonlighting seems to be a widespread practice, information relating to amount of income from each is important. Summer jobs provide an average yearly supplement of \$1252. So for those who held them it appears that these jobs are probably very low pay, since this amount spread over the twelve weeks of the summer works out to an average salary of about \$100 a week.

The information on summer jobs is interesting but the researchers were more concerned with the moonlighting problem, since an additional job would probably impact most on teaching effectiveness if held during the regular year. Respondents reported an average yearly supplement of \$2799.46 from their moonlighting jobs. This was earned by spending an average 13.6 hours per week at the moonlighting activity. Again, these jobs appear to be very low pay. The survey revealed that teachers moonlight in relatively menial positions. Respondents listed selling tickets for school athletic events, mowing lawns, working in a church nursery, babysitting, waiting tables, and various kinds of sales. All respondents holding moonlighting positions were asked if they felt that the quality of their teaching would improve if they did not moonlight. Sixty-four percent of those moonlighting answered yes to this question. Moonlighting subjects were also asked if they would quit the second job if their teaching salaries were increased adequately, and if so, how much of a raise they would require before halting their moonlighting activities. Seventy-five percent of moonlighters indicated that they would quit if given an adequate raise, while the average amount of necessary salary increase named was \$3400 per year.

Discussion

One can only conclude that a state of crisis in education exists in Texas. One out of three teachers are seriously considering leaving teaching. Twenty-two percent

feel compelled to moonlight at jobs far below their level of education and experience. Males are scarce and are being driven to consider giving up their profession in even larger numbers than are females. The prime source of dissatisfaction is inadequate salaries, but poor administrative policies and lack of discipline are also major sources of discontent.

If present trends such as double-digit inflation and decreased financial support for education are not reversed, a severe teacher shortage in the near future seems unavoidable. Indeed, such shortages already exist in some geographic areas and in certain teaching specialties. Males will continue to decline to teach or to leave the field once they have entered. Better students will refuse to become teachers, and better teachers will leave the profession. Moonlighting will become even more common, taking its toll on family life and on time spent preparing for the next day's teaching. One west Texas school district has adopted a policy against moonlighting and the courts have upheld that policy. If other school districts react in this fashion, this will only increase the speed with which teachers leave the profession.

There is a need to repeat this study over the next few years to see if the trends discovered in this research continue. The researchers plan to make their survey a yearly one. If the educational environment is not drastically improved in the near future, a substantial decline in the quality of public school education in Texas is inevitable. Time will tell.